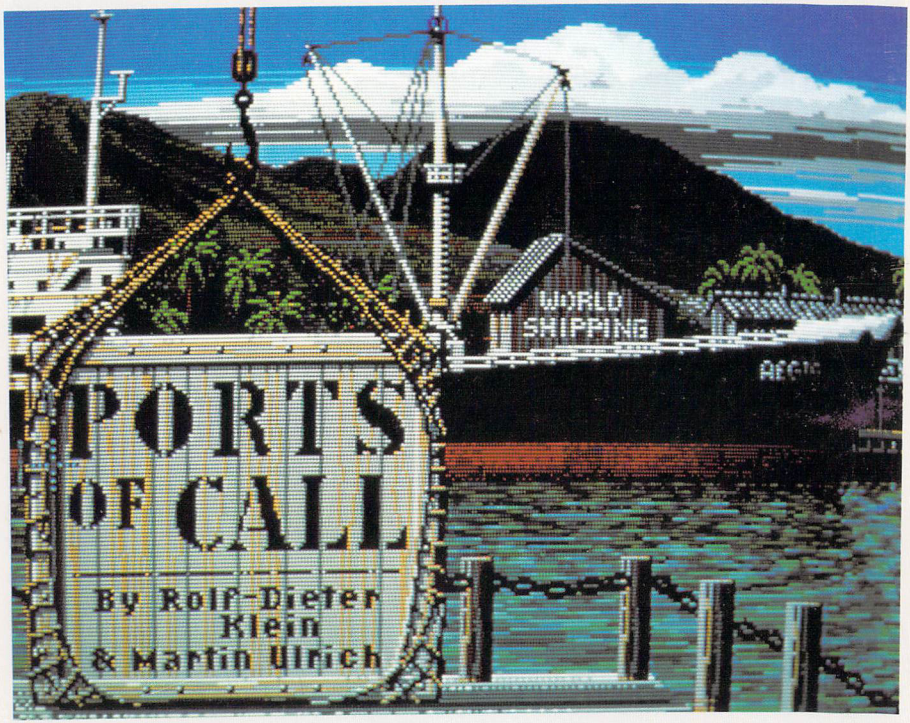
PORTS OF CALL



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Ports of Call™

The Maritime Simulation Game

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About the Game

A Background on Tramp Shipping

The traffic of goods by sea is organized in accordance with international agreements and contracts between individual countries. About 80% of the goods (called "cargo volume") transported between two countries is handled by ships registered under the flags of the countries concerned. The remaining 20% is open to the free competition of ships of other flags. These ships, called "tramp" ships, are usually prepared to transport all kinds of goods. This aspect of the shipping business is the focus of Ports of Call.

Whether a tramp ship owner makes a profit depends upon: on the one hand, the laws, regulations and subsidies of his country, and on the other, the rules of supply and demand. If, for example, there has been a good coffee harvest, coffee prices will drop, and since there is a lot of coffee to be shipped, the freight charges will rise. Now, if a lot of owners start to compete for the business, the freight capacity will start to increase, with a consequent drop in freight rates. If the coffee harvest was bad, the freight rates will drop even though the coffee price has risen, because the shipping capacity is now in excess.

If a crop is exceptionally poor, it may be necessary for the ship owner to temporarily lay his ships up. In this situation, the ships cannot be sold because the ships' prices have dropped (supply and demand). Also it is not economically viable to operate the ships because the income nowhere covers the overhead — fixed costs, such as maintenance and finance, still have to be carried. This is now the time to buy good, used ships at a low price. Apart from the economic aspects, life aboard a tramp ship can be pretty exciting and that's no "old sailor's yarn"!

The Object of the Game

Each player founds his own shipping company, with a starting capital of $5 million to buy ships. Freight and ports

can be chosen continuously from offers on the market. Then the captain chooses an economic travelling speed and casts off to encounter many adventures on the high seas.

After unloading his cargo, the captain is credited with the agreed payment. Then he may refuel, make necessary repairs, and so on. The next job is to find a new, lucrative cargo, buy further ships, and/or repay his mortgages; in other words, he must have a more productive company than his competitors.

The strategy of the game is flexible. A rogue will try to make a quick buck by using cheap ships and juggling the freight rates to force his competitors into bankruptcy. The careful player, in contrast, will build a solid financial foundation. The superior speed of his high-tech fleet will enable him to snap up the more lucrative contracts.

Any strategy is deemed to fail if you don't have a good captain to bring your ship across the world's stormy seas. The formulas for ship movement have been calculated so that ships respond to changes in speed and movements of the rudder as in the real world. It is recommended that the beginner does not start with ships that are too large. These are slow to respond and, as such, require a more experienced captain.

A ship's movement at sea runs at high speed. The captain, however, must select the correct speed. Fuel consumption depends on the time at sea and the weather conditions. Determination of the economic travelling speed depends on fuel prices and freight rates. Hence, you can see that a captain's decisions also have an influence on the success of the company.

The credit rating of an enterprise is very dependent on its social status. The more ports served by a line, the higher the status. And an owner who is operating modern, expensive ships has a naturally better standing than the owner of a rusty, floating wreck. The captain's conduct also affects a company's credit.

A player's chances of success improve the more he knows about international shipping. All data for the game originated from actual developments in the maritime world:

the fluctuation of freight rates, refueling costs, port charges, and ship operating costs. The ship operating costs include amounts payable for tax, management, crew expenses, safety precautions, and other costs — these vary significantly from country to country. These general costs are calculated for each individual ship and are reduced in accordance with the subsidies, tax reductions, etc., that are valid in the country of registration. The accounts are then automatically debited periodically, without the knowledge of the owner.

Ship prices are the same for all ship owners. However, in reality, ship building is subsidized differently in each country; therefore, a compensatory figure is included in the basic costs.

In summary, Ports of Call has been developed with this motto in mind: "Software with Hard Facts."

Getting Started

What You Need to Run Ports of Call

Ports of Call will run on any of the Amiga family of computers with 512K RAM and one disk drive. Kickstart and Workbench versions 1.2 (or greater) are required.

Loading Ports of Call

To start Ports of Call:

On the Amiga 500 and 2000:
- Insert the Ports of Call disk into the internal drive (DF0:) after turning the computer on.
- Place the cursor on the **PoC** disk icon and double click the Selection (left) mouse button.
- When the window opens, double click on the **PortsofCall** ship icon.

On the Amiga 1000:

- Insert Kickstart after turning the computer on.
- When the Workbench hand appears, insert the Ports of Call disk into the internal drive (DF0:).
- Place the cursor on the **PoC** disk icon and double click the Selection (left) mouse button.
- When the window opens, double click on the **PortsofCall** ship icon.

Personalizing Your Program

Before you can continue, you must enter your name and registration number. A requestor will appear with a blue cursor in the first edit field. This is where you are to type your first name, space, then your last name. If your name has special characters, use the English equivalent — ae for ä, for example. Also, enter an i in place of y. Press RETURN and type the registration number (found on your registration card). Select **OK** and the game will proceed.

Playing The Game

After you start the game, you will be presented with a series of questions. The first asks, **Load an Old Game?**. Click on **NO** with the Selection (left) mouse button if you've never played before. You can load a saved game by selecting **YES**, in which case, a storage requestor will appear with a list of your saved games.

A new requestor will appear asking you to choose the desired time duration of play. You have options of selecting 1 hour, 2 hours, 3 hours or until the game is over. If you play a timed game and you reach the time limit, you are given the option of continuing play or quitting. After selecting the desired time duration, select **OK**.

Next, a requestor will appear asking you to select the degree of playing difficulty. You will be presented with three options: **Beginner**, **Expert** and **Genius**. If you are new to the game, select **Beginner**, then select **OK**.

A requestor will then appear asking you to choose the number of players. You can enter up to four. After entering the number of players, select **OK.**

The registration form requestor will appear asking you to fill out the ship Captain's name and the name of the shipping company. Click with the Selection button inside the **Name** drawer, type your name and press RETURN. Then type a name for your fictional company and press RETURN. Select **OK.**

After registering, you must choose a home port. Select any of the 28 ports listed and select **OK.** A screen will then appear with a picture of the globe, showing you the location of your port. Select **go on** to continue. The entire registration and port selection process will be repeated for each player.

After all players are registered, the World Simulation Display will appear (see Figure 1). This is the main screen of the game, where all action starts and stops.

Figure 1 The World Simulation Display.

The Ports of Call Menu Bar

You can see the Menu Bar when you press the Menu (right) mouse button. To choose a menu item, put the cursor on the **Project** heading and move it down until the item you want is highlighted. Release the Menu button and that item is chosen. The **Project** menu includes:

- **About...**, which brings up a window containing copyright information and the version number. **Free Memory** measures (in bytes) how much memory is currently available.

- **New Game** will clear from memory the current game and start an entirely new game.

- **Load** will bring up the storage requestor so that you may load a previously saved game to resume play.

- **Save** will save the current game you are playing, provided it has already been named; otherwise, the storage requestor will appear so that you may enter a filename and directory.

- **Save As** will bring up the storage requestor allowing you to specify any drive or directory and filename to save the game to. After selecting **Save As...**, type the **name** of the game in the **filename** box and the directory you want to save it to in the **drawer** box and then select **OK.**

- **Print** will print the current screen. If you have a printer other than an Epson, you must copy its driver to the Ports of Call disk and install it using the Preferences program. Consult the handbook which came with your Amiga for more information.

- If necessary, you can abandon play by choosing **Quit.** Then a requestor will appear asking if you really want to do this for sure. Select **OK** to quit, **CANCEL** to resume play. Upon quitting the game, you will be shown which player has been most successful.

The World Simulation Display

The Simulation Display shows a map of the world on which the ships of all ship owners are shown — you must buy a ship before you can see it. Individual ships are displayed in the company colors. A ship will blink several times when activity is expected. The numbers in rectangular boxes represent the wind strength (on the Beaufort scale) for weather systems calculated by the global weather simulator. The higher numbers indicate storms.

The **ACTION** gadget in the lower left corner is labeled **START**. If you select it again it will change to **STOP**. Selecting **START** allows the **SIMULATION ELAPSED TIME** gadget to continue and the game to proceed. Selecting **STOP** freezes the time gadget, allowing the player to conduct business away from the ship.

The **SIMULATED ELAPSED TIME** gadget contains a simulated 24-hour clock and boxes representing days. The passing of weeks and years are shown underneath.

You must select **STOP** before you can select any of the gadgets on the right side of the World Simulation Display: **GLOBE, OFFICE** and **SHIP BROKER**. Selecting **SHIP BROKER** brings up a requestor showing the current ship owners' company names with buttons next them. When you select a button, a screen will appear showing you an elevator. The elevator has five floors from which to choose, where you can buy or sell ships and get information about the ship market.

Selecting **OFFICE** also lets you select a company name to take you into that company's office. This is where your books are kept, statistics are analyzed, mortgages and bank overdrafts are applied for and repaid, profit and loss statements are prepared and business developments are kept track of. You can also change the location of your home port from within your office if you think it is more economical to operate under a different flag.

Hint: Checking your office periodically will prevent theft.

Selecting **GLOBE** allows each player to determine the location of his ships, the ship's route and Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA). These details are recorded on the Globe, which can be rotated into any viewing position when you hold the Selection (left) mouse button down on the rotation gadget in the coordinate system and drag it to a new positions while still holding down the Selection button.

In the World Simulation Display, the window in the lower right corner displays the relative status of the shipping companies.

After all the ship owners have bought their ships, select **START**. The map will blink the ships in different colors to signify an activity will occur.

The Port Display

You will now be presented with a screen showing the captain's cabin — you can see your port through the porthole (see Figure 2). The chalkboard contains information regarding the city and country of your port. The captain's log lists the last port visited, cargo, profits, bank balance, ship condition and available fuel (in tons). The clipboard contains options which you can activate by selecting them.

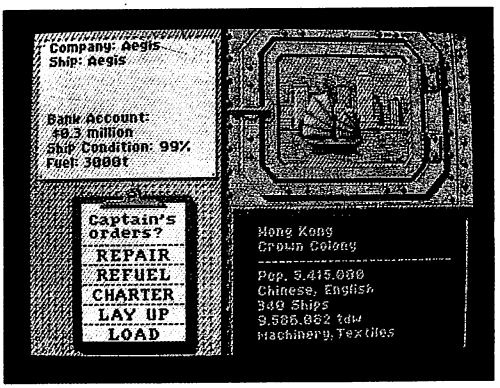

Figure 2 The Captain's Cabin.

Repairing Your Ship

If you bought a used ship, chances are that it needs a little minor repair. After selecting **REPAIR**, you will be presented with a requestor showing you the damage and repair status of your ship. You can select the level of repairs you want or can afford.

Refueling Your Ship

To refuel your ship, select **REFUEL.** This will bring up the refueling screen, where you can select how much fuel to put in your ship. By clicking the select button on any of these buttons: **25%, 50%, 75%** or **100%**, the fuel will rise in the tank to that level.

Chartering Your Ship

Selecting **CHARTER** allows you to choose where you will go next and what type of cargo to carry. Every port has different types of cargo — some worth a lot more than others. To determine the best cargo, click on the various destinations and available cargoes to determine the most lucrative charter.

Laying Up

Laying up means to dock your ship for a short time. You may want to wait until the laws of supply and demand command a higher price for your cargo. As a ship owner, it may become necessary to temporarily "lay up" the ship for a week or so, because it is not economically viable to to operate the ship when the income doesn't cover the overhead.

Loading Your Cargo

When you are ready to embark, select **LOAD CARGO**, then select **OK**. The screen will turn blank indicating an action is taking place and you will return to the World Simulation Display. Your ship will appear in your company color. When it blinks on and off, you are ready to navigate through the harbor on your way to the destination port.

Navigating Your Ship

Navigation is the most important aspect of being a successful Captain. The ship must be maneuvered in and out of different harbors and oftentimes through difficult obstacles. The Navigation Control Panel is made up of the following components: the **Power Regulator, Speed Indicator,** and **Rudder Regulator** (see Figure 3). Each one must be mastered to successfully navigate your ship.

The Power Regulator

The power regulator functions similar to a gas pedal in a car. To go faster, hold the select button down and drag the speed regulator up to go forwards, and down to go backwards.

Actual ship acceleration is simulated, so it takes time to gain speed. With the regulator positioned in the exact center (represented by a horizontal line) the ship's engine is at idle.

The Speed Indicator

The speed indicator is represented by a small horizontal line directly to the right of the power regulator. It functions similar to a speedometer by showing you how fast you are moving. If the speed indicator is moving fast, you have a lot of momentum and it will take longer to slow down or change direction. Beginning ship captains should take time and experiment with the navigation control panel until they are familiar with maneuvering techniques.

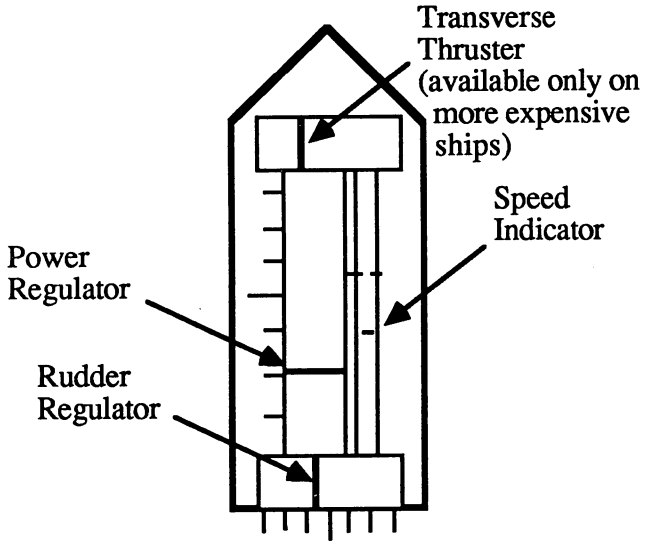

Figure 3 The Navigation Control Panel.

The Rudder Regulator

The rudder regulator is identical to a steering wheel. When the ship is moving forward, dragging it to the left will turn the ship left and dragging it right will steer the ship right.

When the ship is traveling backwards it functions the opposite.

Entering a Harbor

The goal when entering a harbor is to safely dock your ship and park it inside the blue target shaped like an arrow (called the berth). The front of the ship must be pointing in the same direction as the arrow to successfully dock the ship, and the ship must be motionless and parallel to the dock inside the blue target. The hourglass represents how much time you have to accomplish this. You can use tugboat assistance if you feel it is too difficult, but tugs cost you a lot of money. If you are low on funds, you will be forced to steer by hand.

Leaving a Harbor

You successfully leave a harbor by navigating your ship through the blue target window. You aren't penalized for exiting backwards. The goal is to safely exit without crashing or going beyond the time limit shown in the hourglass. You can use tugboat assistance if you feel it is too difficult, but tugs cost you a lot of money. If you are low on funds, you will be forced to steer by hand.

On the Open Sea

When you have successfully left the harbor, a screen will appear containing information on your destination, freight on board, distance to travel (in nautical miles), and the deadline for delivery (if any). Also, you may choose your traveling speed (in knots). Remember, the higher the speed, the more fuel is consumed; on the other hand, a long journey results in a high total of fixed operating expenses. After making your choices, you must challenge the cold, cruel sea — you may **STOP ACTION** at any time during the voyage to catch up on office work, buy ships, and so on. Bon Voyage!

And the Winner Is...

When the game is over, the **Ranking List** will appear. The winner is determined by who has the highest status. If it's a tie score, the assets are taken into account.

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